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ABSTRACT

In the school-college partnership movement state policy can play an important role in sustaining partnerships as part of an active general strategy for educational change. Individual institutions and communities cannot solve the social problems facing the nation without working in cooperation with a broad network of other agencies and communities. Policymakers and educators have begun to re-examine the priorities and strategies that underlie domestic initiatives in the states and the nation. Collaboration has resulted in successful programs that make an impact on youth, families, education, and social systems. Recent collaborations have involved agencies and institutions planning together and setting mutual goals, engaging in collaborative action, trying to evaluate the impacts of collaborative strategies, and choosing joint budgeting. Successful collaboration involving higher education has three attributes: (1) mutual objectives driving joint planning, (2) new infrastructures that support collaborative goals, and (3) objective, long-term evaluation. State policy can support this movement by reviewing teacher education, interagency collaboration, and funding formulas and by considering policy levers such as incentives to foster multi-agency cooperation, coordination with federal programs, and expansion of existing partnerships. Eight key questions for state policy makers are suggested. (JB)

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USING STATE POLICY TO FOSTER AND SUSTAIN COLLABORATION

Education Commission of the States

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BUILDING BRIDGES:
USING STATE POLICY TO FOSTER AND SUSTAIN COLLABORATION

by

Manuel N. Gómez
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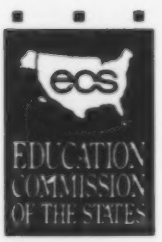

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FOREWORD

SINCE the mid-1980s, the upsurge in partnerships forming among schools, colleges, businesses and communities could be characterized as nothing short of an "educational movement." While nearly all the partnerships share a goal of improving student achievement, their activities cover a wide range of ventures, from loosely formed single-purpose agreements to long-term efforts to restructure the organization and provision of educational services.

As part of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) project on *State Leadership for Partnerships: Building Bridges Between Schools and Colleges*, ECS (with support from the Aetna Foundation) surveyed the current partnership movement to better understand the scope and nature of collaboration between K-12 and higher education. This endeavor laid the groundwork for further inquiry into a policy concern of both the Aetna Foundation and ECS: identifying the appropriate state role in fostering and sustaining school-college collaboration, particularly those partnerships that seek to improve student success for members of racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in higher education.

Our work thus far has included both informal and organized discussions with participants and supporters of partnerships at all levels of education and government. We also commissioned two papers to provide background and to guide our thinking. *Building Bridges: A Review of the School-College Partnership Literature* by Jennifer Wallace, a former ECS research assistant, summarizes the recent history of partnerships and the "lessons learned" about the process of collaboration. She identifies gaps where further study is warranted if the partnership movement is to grow and flourish. This paper, *Building Bridges: Using State Policy to Foster and Sustain*

Collaboration, by Manuel N. Gómez, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, University of California, Irvine, and Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr., vice chancellor for educational development, Maricopa Community Colleges, Arizona, discusses the state policy implications pertaining to collaborative partnerships. Its goal is to help policy makers create strategies to establish and sustain partnerships — particularly partnerships between schools and colleges.

A recurring theme in both papers is that, until recently, most partnerships developed quite independently of any state role. State policies are viewed as benign at best, obstructive and counterproductive at worst. Whether it's because of, or in spite of, these factors, identifying the appropriate state role is a relatively new line of inquiry.

The question is not whether states have a legitimate stake in partnerships. They do, primarily because of the role collaboration can play in addressing state responsibilities for an educated citizenry and a productive work force. Rather, the question facing state policy leaders — governors, legislators, K-12 and higher education system officials — is what to do about it. How can states provide the support, resources and incentives to stimulate local collaboration while embedding those efforts in a broader, more comprehensive strategy for education reform and improvement across the sectors?

Our answer to that question lies in more closely linking state policies and leadership strategies for supporting partnerships with states' efforts for education reform and improvement. Thus, project objectives are to:

Identify state policies and leadership strategies for promoting collaboration between schools and colleges. State strategies must be framed within a context that carefully balances the educational needs of a state with the need to energize local partnership efforts. This objective focuses on identifying successful or promising policy approaches which (1) make local capacity building possible and (2) are consistent with a coherent state policy structure, that is, are among many policies directed toward improving educational achievement.

Strengthen the connection between collaboration and education reform by emphasizing the use of partnerships as catalysts for change. In many instances, the new relationships stemming from school-college partnerships may represent the first fragile beginnings of education reform. Rather than partnerships being viewed as ends in themselves, they can be alternately viewed as means for restructuring and improving education systems — both K-12 and higher education. This objective seeks to expand the role of partnerships to encompass their use as effective tools for reform and as critical features of a systemic approach to policy making.

Foster the state leadership needed to build a broad base of support for schools and colleges working together. If collaborative efforts are to become integral to and an accepted practice for education systems, then vigorous new kinds of leadership and new roles and relationships from all quarters are required. This objective focuses on raising state leaders' awareness of the benefits of partnerships and engaging their support and commitment to increasing collaboration between schools and colleges.

ECS believes accomplishing the objectives of this initiative will help state leaders make policy decisions that support collaboration between K-12 and higher education, and in particular, collaboration to improve minority student success. Over the long term, ECS seeks to encourage and facilitate a larger dialogue to redefine the underlying problem which partnerships seek to resolve. As long as the problem is cast as the failure of particular students to achieve college-level expectations within the existing education enterprise, state efforts to improve minority-student success will continue to treat the symptoms rather than the cause. The successes demonstrated by partnerships can help direct attention to the dramatic failure of most education systems to help all students, regardless of race or class, meet the high expectations now set for only a few.

Sandra Ruppert
ECS Project Director

INTRODUCTION

THE significant social problems facing this nation cannot be solved by schools, social services or any one institution or agency acting alone. Problems of illiteracy, drugs, crime, poor child health and nutrition, and unemployment are too complex to respond to solutions that address only a symptom, such as high school absentee rates, rather than the underlying problem or problems, such as family poverty.

While states and communities have tried to solve such problems and provide needed services such as housing, education, welfare and health care, these efforts have failed to make a significant difference in the lives of children, teenagers and their families. As the Ford Foundation asserted in its 1989 report, *The Common Good*:

> *The tendency has been to isolate self-contained problems — educational deficiency, teen pregnancy, joblessness, family disorders and so on — then to fund isolated programs run by self-contained agencies. As a result, efforts . . . are typically piecemeal, dominated by short time-frames, inadequately funded and uncoordinated.*

Many factors external to schools significantly affect what happens to children in the schools and how the schools must function. The context in which public schools operate, particularly those in urban settings, differs significantly from that of 10 to 15 years ago.

- The majority of students in most urban public school districts are "minority" students. For example, more than 70% of public school students in Rochester, New York, are minorities. In Los Angeles County Unified School District, more than 86% are minorities.

- More than 50% of these children live below the poverty line.

- A large number of girls 18 years of age or younger have children. In Phoenix, Arizona, for example, an average of three babies are born each day to public high school students.

- About one out of every 10 babies born to these girls weighs less than five pounds, creating health risks for the baby that often result in learning impairments which schools are not able to address alone.

- An increasing number of students and parents have limited proficiency in English. In some school districts, more than 87 languages are spoken by students. More than 46,000 of the 300,000 students in Dade County, Florida, speak a language other than English. In California's Santa Ana Unified School District, 90% of students have a primary language other than English.

- More than 25% of students who begin the 9th grade leave high school before they graduate.

- Unemployment rates for minority urban youths between the ages of 16-19 are three to four times higher than the rate for other youth.

Tragic events in Los Angeles and other cities illustrate the interconnectedness of such educational and social needs. In response, policy makers and educators have begun to re-examine the priorities and strategies that underlie domestic initiatives in the states and the nation.

Policy Implications

Education and social policy, although influenced by federal priorities, is made and carried out largely at the state level. It is critical that state policy makers and education leaders begin to work together to create an education system that is connected to and works in harmony with other state and local agencies and institutions serving young people. State policies must bring together the resources of multiple entities, public and private, to accelerate progress in addressing social problems.

The implications that collaboration in education and social policies has for policy decisions are significant. Legislative changes will be needed to encourage and support collaboration. Categorical distinctions between programs will need to be re-examined. State budgets will need to be restructured to finance cooperative programs involving two or more agencies. Human service professionals will need to be retrained to think collaboratively rather than territorially.

State policies should build upon, expand and institutionalize what has been learned from the best collaborative practices. Policies should seek to amplify partnerships that have demonstrated their value. They should build upon and restructure many current programs and encourage new structures that foster systemic change through collaboration.

Is this kind of extensive reform warranted? Yes. First, educators and policy makers know that fragmented education and social policies are not satisfactorily addressing the nation's complex problems. Second, there are proven examples where collaboration has resulted in successful programs that have made a marked impact on youth, families, education and social systems.

New Collaborations

What is different about the collaboration needed as the nation enters the 21st century? There are five dimensions in which collaboration among institutions will differ from that of the past:

1. New partnerships will entail agencies and/or institutions planning together. Various agencies will examine and analyze needs jointly, resulting in each agency better understanding how the problems it is addressing relate to other problems facing not only the student or family involved but also the nation.

2. New collaborations will involve agencies in mutual goal setting. Together, agencies and institutions will determine the priorities of their states and communities and the objectives that must be accomplished to address them.

3. The new approach will feature collaborative action. Agencies will work together to provide programs and services that better serve people and which enhance the effectiveness of their efforts.

4. New partnerships will include efforts to evaluate the impacts of collaborative strategies. This step will include assessing costs and benefits and determining ways in which collaboration can be improved.

5. And, finally, the new approach will require joint budgeting. As resource allocation decisions are made, state officials will need to ensure that the financial support required for collaborative initiatives to be implemented and sustained is available.

HIGHER EDUCATION: KEY PARTNER IN COLLABORATION

ONE place where such collaboration can pay off is in school-college partnerships. In many communities, institutions of higher education are seen as prestigious, respected and as a significant resource. Because of this, campuses often can provide the leadership needed to bring together diverse institutions.

In addition, the mission of higher education conforms closely with the goals of most highly promising collaboratives. For example, most collaboratives wish to address far-reaching needs of society and seek a better understanding of the causes and magnitude of educational and social concerns. Colleges and universities have at hand scholars from a range of disciplines, whose expertise can be used to examine the social contexts in which educational problems arise.

Higher education benefits as well from participation and leadership in collaboratives. Research agendas and interdisciplinary scholarship generated help to foster new connections within higher education, resulting in innovative academic pursuits. Involvement in multi-institutional collaboratives — particularly through roles that draw upon the academic resources and administrative leadership of the campus — help ground university scholarship and teaching in the "real" issues facing a community. Partnerships with K-12 schools and community institutions connect scholarly research, undergraduate and graduate instruction, and campus public service in pursuit of a solution to the nation's most pressing problems.

Seeds of Successful Collaboration

The mid-1980s marked the beginning of a period of rapid growth in the emergence of education partnerships. Some scholars credit school reform reports, specifically *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, with driving the expansion of the partnership movement. An analysis of a 1989 American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) survey suggests many reasons for the formation of partnerships by education institutions. Among these are efforts to improve teaching in science and mathematics, to provide precollegiate, on-campus experiences for middle-school students, and to design and implement a multicultural curriculum.

Broader partnerships focus on enhancing opportunities for children and youth to succeed in school, the community and the workplace. These initiatives have recognized that each segment of the education system — elementary schools, middle/junior high schools, high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities — cannot deal individually with the problems that plague the students, and none by itself can solve problems outside the education system.

Lessons Learned

What has been learned about educational partnerships since the rapid growth began nearly 10 years ago? First, effective partnerships show a rich diversity of approaches. Second, effective partnerships demonstrate the importance of both state and local initiatives providing leadership and support. Third, effective partnerships reflect a strong consensus on the value of pilot programs to test innovative collaborative arrangements.

What are the critical ingredients or the common features of successful collaboration? Features are: planning, goal setting, action, evaluating and budgeting. In addition, they share a particular emphasis on three basic attributes: (a) mutual objectives that drive joint planning and policy development; (b) new "infrastructures" that support collaborative goals and activities; and (c) objective, long-term evaluation.

- **Mutual Objectives** - Participants in successful educational collaboratives share common objectives and have entered into joint planning and policy development to address these shared concerns. This step has enabled them to address problems that extend beyond a single organization's domain. Setting mutual objectives involves several steps: (a) establishing joint planning processes, (b) pooling and/or targeting resources, (c) coordinating the process of implementing the programs and (d) agreeing on responsibilities and timelines for accomplishing joint objectives.

▲ **New "Infrastructures"** - Effective collaboration also requires development of new "infrastructures" or innovative arrangements. These arrangements typically reflect the dedication of top leaders to collaboration and provide an institutional foundation for partnerships. New organizational arrangements — "inventions" of a sort — have been created to serve as a foundation for ongoing cooperation and to respond to the needs of collaborative activities.

A variety of such infrastructures has been developed to foster and sustain institutional collaboration. Some arrangements have involved establishment of "governing councils," others create high-level administrative "offices" within institutions responsible for collaboration, still others formed joint implementation teams at the local level, and some did each of the above.

The important feature about these infrastructures is that they differ from those typically found within individual organizations. Their functions, tasks and accountability are defined in relation to the achievement of common goals that, while connected to the objectives of their institutions and the individual units in which they work, are largely tied to partnership objectives.

▲ **Systematic and Objective Evaluation** - The third feature of successful collaboratives is that they routinely and systematically collect objective indicators of program quality and impact. These measures typically include attention to the overall collaboratives, to different sites within them, to various projects and program elements they encompass and to different "cohorts" of students and families served.

Successful collaboratives are committed to using evaluation information to improve their partnerships. In essence, they treat the collaborative as a living, evolving entity — one requiring feedback and guidance. They do not see information about problems or failures as threatening. Rather, they become involved in a process of "invention" of new relationships and arrangements in which trial and feedback is a crucial tool. Persons involved in K-12/higher education partnerships also recognize that what they are doing both derives from and changes the environment. They recognize that their collaborative is in a continuing process of flux as circumstances evolve and that this requires flexibility among evaluators as well as rapid feedback.

STATE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

HOW can state policy promote collaboration among education agencies and between education and other sectors? In defining policy options, it is clear that many present policies and the way they are implemented need to be changed — indeed, some need to be dismantled. In addition, new policies need to be considered.

Thus, state policy makers need to take a two-pronged approach: (a) review present policies and modify or delete those that are counterproductive and (b) adopt new policies that will promote collaboration.

Policy Areas That Need Review

Many collaboratives seem to work well in spite of state policies that make such cooperation difficult. In many states, the focus of state policy is micro-management of the different segments of the public education system. Such policies tend to meet the needs of the bureaucracy rather than allowing teachers and faculty members the flexibility to be innovative in meeting students' needs.

Three critical areas of the current state policy environment that warrant review are:

1. **Teacher education** - The professional development of teachers and administrators, both preservice and inservice, often seems unrelated to the needs of public-school students. Policy makers need to examine issues such as curriculum content, use of technology, new pedagogy and articulation between schooling segments in their state's teacher education programs to ensure they are tied directly to student needs.

2. **Interagency collaboration** - Unaligned and fragmented state policies can prohibit state agencies from providing services such as health care to students and their families at schools or other convenient sites. State policies often prohibit agencies from sharing information or working together to provide coordinated services.

3. **Funding formulas** - Each state needs to eliminate inequities from its education funding formulas. Collaboration is not possible without a system of funding that provides adequate resources to **all** schools and students.

Policy Levers To Consider

The adoption of new policies should be based on the role of state policy to build upon, expand and institutionalize what has been learned from the best of collaborative practices. There is a foundation of experience in which different segments, including K-12 and higher education, and a variety of social and community organizations have come together to establish effective, long-term solutions to pressing education and social ills.

Three state policy options have particular promise for fostering effective and sustained partnerships. Each of these can be undertaken through (a) legislative and regulatory vehicles that foster collaborative strategies within programs administered by or through the state, and/or through (b) state budgetary policies that establish a fiscal framework for collaborative planning and program implementation.

1. **Incentives that foster multi-agency cooperation** — Fiscal incentives can be established to encourage individuals and institutions to cooperate across organizational boundaries. New funding allocation procedures can target resources toward collaborating on systemic reform. States also can replace current program funding with new funding aimed at establishing comprehensive, cooperative approaches to addressing education and social issues. Alternatively, existing allocations can include community-wide and multi-institutional strategies to address major state needs in education and human services.

2. **Coordination with federal programs that foster collaboration** — The federal government has a number of programs fostering collaboration and administered by such agencies as the departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development and the National Science Foundation. These programs typically include funding provisions that require or encourage collaboration in program implementation. States can award the federal funds they administer and complementary state funds in a way that encourages collaboration by building upon these federal

initiatives. The purpose is not only to encourage the creation of alliances between a variety of institutions but also to establish consistent federal and state policies.

3. **Expansion of existing local partnerships** — State policy can help existing local partnerships develop beyond their current focus — be they collaboratives involving K-12 and higher education, schools and social service or health agencies, or schools and business and industry. Existing exemplary efforts also can serve as vehicles to spark broader integration of institutions, agencies and organizations across a community, resulting in a solid foundation for coalitions involving education and other agencies.

Questions State Policy Makers Need to Ask

When reviewing present policies or considering new policy options, state policy makers need to address several issues. To begin, they need to question whether or how the existing or proposed policy fosters the five dimensions of successful collaboration discussed earlier: planning, goal setting, action, evaluating and budgeting. Other questions to ask include:

1. Is there a clear, explicit state-level mission statement that advocates collaboration as a means to help all students learn? Does the policy reflect a consensus about expectations for what all students should know and be able to do?

2. Does the state have a "policy framework" for collaboration that incorporates a careful balance of centralized control over expectations and standards with local autonomy over most other decisions?

3. Are there conflicting definitions, standards and procedures among programs and policies?

4. Are transfer, admissions and articulation policies between education segments aligned to create easy transitions at critical juncture points?

5. Does the policy reflect real and tangible rewards for collaboration (such as more money, greater flexibility or waivers from cumbersome regulations)?

6. Do finance policies encourage cross-departmental budgeting?

7. Is the allocation of funds tied to performance?

8. Are reporting and accountability mechanisms among programs and policies consistent and straightforward? Do they focus more on outcomes and less on process?

SUMMARY

STATE policies can build upon, expand and institutionalize what has been learned from the best collaborative practices. They can encourage the creation of collaborative delivery systems and "infrastructures" for education and social programs. These can lead to systemic changes in the education system and institutionalize the comprehensive collaboration that is a critical ingredient of sustained partnerships.

Evidence shows some collaborative efforts are succeeding in improving the education and social conditions for young people in this nation. Head Start and related state preschool programs have had a dramatic impact. Longitudinal studies have found reductions in the numbers of school-aged children requiring special education, lessened numbers of high school dropouts, reduced crime rates and increased labor force participation as a result of Head Start, which provides early childhood education through a collaborative model.

The federal effort in drug prevention has resulted in marked reductions in the use of illicit drugs. And new strategies are being developed to help children prenatally exposed to drugs. This collaborative approach has involved K-12 schools, institutions of higher education and other public and private agencies.

At the state level, student achievement is one area that has shown the benefits of collaborative initiatives. In California, for example, a larger and more diverse pool of high school seniors is eligible for admission to the state university than several years ago. This increase has been credited to collaborative reform efforts between K-12 and higher education which have encouraged more students to enroll in courses traditionally considered college preparatory. The

partnerships worked to help underrepresented students succeed in these courses and to prepare for participation in postsecondary education.

There is a strong research base emerging which indicates the benefits of state policies that foster and sustain connections between schools, colleges and universities; the home and the school; education and business and industry; education and the community; and education and other local public entities. Research shows that state policies which draw upon, are integrated with and respect community lead to improved learning.

Through a variety of policy approaches, states can create incentives and rewards for developing innovative, multi-institutional collaborative approaches to improve education and social conditions. Policy makers must act in bold new ways to overcome barriers and accomplish lasting change in the nation's education institutions and in the communities whose well-being will determine whether schools at all levels flourish or languish.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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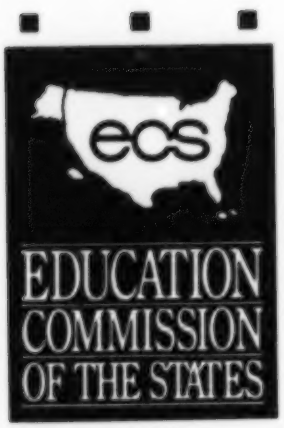
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